

The Memorandum of Understanding for Transition Services was revised and renewed July 1, 2011 and is in effect through June 30, 2015 or until such time as IDEA is reauthorized. Parties to the agreement are the Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education, Job Service North Dakota, the Department of Career and Technical Education and the Department of Health's Children Special Health Services Unit, Developmental Disabilities Division and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The MOU addresses many areas including: consultation and technical assistance, transition planning, roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of the agencies and outreach. Some of those activities are described below.

DVR policy provides that Individualized Plans for Employment are developed as soon as possible, but at least before the student leaves high school. Since the actual service delivery takes place in the eight regions of the state, each region has developed a regional transition Community of Practice committee. Each regional committee is to develop committee goals which are in various phases of implementation. The committees use a specific document for their planning process entitled: "*Essential Tools, Interagency Transition Team Development and Facilitation*" published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Training, OSEP. The use of this document is helping to better coordinate efforts. Updated training was held in December 2011 for the Regional Community of Practice groups.

The goals include the following elements: how transition activities will be implemented, the source and amount of funding needed, who is involved and their roles and responsibilities, and evaluation criteria. The Department of Public Instruction also contracts for services to track students with disabilities exiting secondary education, how many go to employment, how many enter post-secondary training, how many have other post-secondary plans and how many do not.

North Dakota's Community of Practice on Transition has representation from each region and continues to be very active, holding quarterly meetings. Four subcommittees were established in 2009 to address specific areas of need: **Assessment, Information Sharing, Youth Leadership** and **Healthy Transitions**. A fifth committee on **Employment** was initiated in December 2011. DVR is the lead on this subcommittee. These committees have been involved with or are currently working on the following projects:

Training on the utilization of the assessment occurred during the Transition Conference that was held in April 2011. Also, the Department of Public Instruction contracted with a person to record and archive the training on this document. This information will be available through DPI's website.

A collaborative effort with the Client Assistance Program, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice, Family Voices, DVR and youth resulted in the development of a Youth Conference focusing on developing a Youth

Leadership Movement in North Dakota and assisting youth with developing self advocacy skills.

DVR coordinated with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to develop the administrative code and policies for the Transition to Independence Program. A Strategic Plan was then conducted and used to give direction to the project. DVR co-facilitates the quarterly meetings with this group.

The Employment committee is focusing on soft skills training, job coach training and the tie with business services.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had committed approximately \$500,000 per year statewide to fund transition activities. The local education units, and other partners, may provide additional funds and resources. In 2011, DVR also funded special transition projects for summer employment, a transition camp for students with disabilities and transition fairs.

In 2011, DVR launched the teacher Internship Project. The DVR Teacher Internship Project was designed to provide teachers with an opportunity to work closely with their local DVR office and transition counselors. The project provided teachers with information regarding the VR program and process, adult agencies, employers' needs, labor market information, disability legislation, etc. The teachers participated in a three-week internship program, beginning with an in-depth orientation to the VR process at the beginning of the internship. The teachers were administered a pre and post evaluation to gauge what they know prior to participating in the program and knowledge gained after the internship. The teachers' knowledge of the VR process, transition and adult agencies went from 66% at the pre-test to 89% at the post test.

Overall, teachers had the opportunity to learn about the services DVR provides and the collaborative partner agencies that also assist clients to become successfully employed. With the realization that for students to be successful during the transition process, we need to consider all avenues and services that might aid in reducing barriers to employment for students with disabilities, regardless if they are pursuing employment or post-secondary training.

In addition, transitioning students who are identified through the education unit's Section 504 coordinator are referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and contacts are made with the guidance counselors to assure those with special needs are aware of services through DVR. Referrals are also received from Independent Living Centers, Human Service Centers, and Community Rehabilitation providers working with transition age students.

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has a very good working relationship with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). We have attended and will continue to attend national conferences bringing back information to be presented as a team at the

state level. We are looking at the feasibility of conducting regional training during the upcoming biennium for DVR & DPI staff, parents, partnering agencies and community advocates.

As a result of need for a better focus on transition in a region within the state, a transition contract was developed and awarded to a Community Rehabilitation Provider in the Fargo region. Currently, there are four transition contracts, two with Community Rehabilitation Providers and two with the school system.